Thursday, July 18, 2019, 10:30 – 12:30
National-Louis University's Chicago campus, 122 S. Michigan Ave. and by conference phone

<u>Present</u>
Mike Abel, Elysia Aufmuth, Cindy Berrey, Carie Bires, Maribel Centeno, Deborah Chalmers, Pat Chamberlain, Debrah Clark, Felicia Crawford, Donna Emmons, Carmen Garcia, Cornelia Grumman, Marsha Hawley, Theresa Hawley, Iris Hildreth, Jamilah R. Jor'dan, Beth Knight, Tom Layman, Jenny Metcalf, Ashley Nazarak, Gail Nelson, Donna Nylander, Bethany Patten, Toni Porter, Emily Ropars, Tamara Sanders-Carter, Teri Talan, Barb Volpe, Cindy Wall, Pam Wicking

1. **Welcome and introductions**
   The group welcomed Cindy Wall, new Bureau Chief for Quality Initiatives at DHS Family & Community Services.

2. **Minutes and follow-up from previous meeting**
   Theresa Hawley moved to approve the minutes of the June 20 meeting. Donna Emmons seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

3. **Hybrid vision document**
   The group edited the document *Vision for ExceleRate Hybrid Model*. The edited version is attached. Changes include:
   - Clarify in the first sentence that this vision requires mutual support of 3 policy areas – (1) revised ExceleRate standards, (2) a revised program funding structure as recommended by the Mixed Delivery System committee, and (3) compensation reforms as recommend by the Workforce initiative. The vision cannot be sustained without all 3 parts.
   - Add the goal of improving the ExceleRate user experience, including programs and families using the ExceleRate system.
   - In the Need section, second bullet, add data on ISBE school-based program movement up and down in the Circles of Quality. Also add data on family child care movement.
   - In the third bullet, equity, add a comparison between child care programs with layered funding vs. those without.
   - Add a bullet on the major obstacles, including staff qualifications, which will be addressed in the revised framework. Refer to the system inequity, that child care and Head Start centers without compensation parity lose credentialed staff to schools.
   - Under System Principles, Statewide program assessment system, modify the first sentence to indicate the value of program self-assessment along with the problem of reliability. Point out that external assessment scores for child care could be drive (be coupled with) coaching and supports, even if decoupled from ratings and funding. This is how the ISBE system works.

   In the discussion, various references were made the Hybrid Concept Graphic from the June meeting, which is attached at the end of these minutes.

4. **Follow-up topic areas for building a workplan**
   Instead of addressing the "Next Steps" notations in the Hybrid vision document, the group used this new document (attached) to identify workplan topic areas and select workgroup members for each area. First the sheet was edited to add the following:

- In the fourth topic area, Process Quality/Professional Practices, add discussion of the links between proposed standards and program/classroom quality assessments.
- Under "Other big questions", Piloting, add possible implementation scale-up. Note the need to identify the critical path items and timing for implementation, to distinguish them from items that can be addressed with more flexible timing.
- Add a bullet about family child care. It can probably be mapped to the framework as envisioned, but it will be important to identify the Foundational Items and their costs. Consider the role of networks to support CQI.
- Add a bullet to ask how the framework can incentivize the lowest-quality programs to get on the improvement ladder.

Volunteers for each topic area are shown on the attachment.
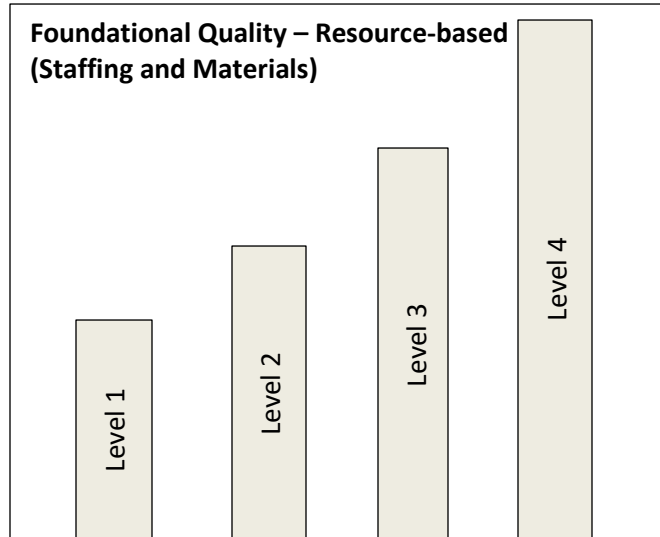
5. **Report to the Quality Committee on 7/23/19**
   The progress report by the Subcommittee co-chairs will highlight the interdependence of ExceleRate, Mixed Delivery Funding, and Compensation recommendations.

6. **Next meeting Thursday, August 15**
   The Subcommittee affirmed its previous decision to alternate locations between the Chicago and Lisle campuses of National Louis University. The next meeting will be at the Lisle campus at the usual time, 10:30 to 12:30.

Hybrid concept graphic 6/18/19

What you have (staffing & materials) + What you do (professional practice + CQI) = Quality

Foundational Quality – Resource-based (Staffing and Materials)

Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4

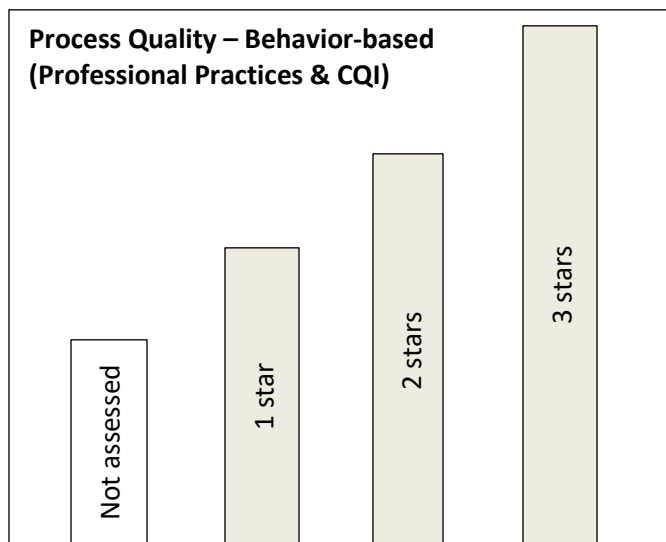Supported by proposed cross-sector incremental funding system

Staffing
- Ratios & group size
- Coverage when staff member is out (subs, floating teachers)
- Staff qualifications
- Compensation/fringe benefits
- Specialized positions (family worker, instr. Leader, etc.

Materials
- Classroom furnishings
- Educational materials
- Curriculum

Process Quality – Behavior-based (Professional Practices & CQI)

Not assessed | 1 star | 2 stars | 3 stars

Supported by Training, TA, consultation & other services

CQI
- Put children first
- Listen to families & staff
- Choose improvement topic(s)
- Learn
- Form teams
- Plan-Do-Review

Professional practices – (A few key indicators by star level)
- Teaching & Learning
- Family & Community Engagement
- Inclusion
- Linguistically & Culturally Appropriate practice

Vision for ExceleRate hybrid model

Vision
A redesigned ExceleRate Illinois® Quality Recognition and Improvement System will operate in conjunction with redesigned funding, quality support, and program assessment systems. The funding system will integrate early care and education funding streams across sectors to meet ExceleRate *foundational quality* standards, including staffing and compensation requirements. The quality improvement system will integrate training, technical assistance, and coaching across sectors to meet ExceleRate *process quality* standards. The program assessment and monitoring system will continue to provide data that informs program and system improvement[1].

The Need

- The current standards were launched in 2014 with the expectation of revisions in 4 – 5 years based on experience.

- While ExceleRate measures quality as intended, the system falls short as a ladder for program improvement. Only 1 in 5 child care centers that were not initially Gold have increased their ratings since 2014. [Add something about increases/decreases for school-based and family child care programs.] Programs in all sectors (school, center and home-based) need help with Continuous Quality Improvement.

- Equity is a challenge, as better-resourced programs tend to achieve recognition and rate add-ons, while others have been unable to meet the requirements. In some parts of the state, very few child care programs have ratings above "Licensed." Quality requirements that increase costs significantly – primarily staffing and materials – are not covered by after-the-fact rate add-on "incentives" offered by the child care system. Programs need foundational funds to cover the actual costs of those items. Overall, only 28% of child care centers are rated Silver or Gold, while almost every Preschool for All program achieves those ratings. [Add data on child care programs with multiple funding streams.] Funding levels are tied to setting type (school vs. center vs. home-based) rather than to the needs of the children and communities.

- Credential attainment has been a major obstacle to ExceleRate ratings, especially in child care and Head Start. On the one hand, the ExceleRate system has been very successful in increasing the number of early childhood personnel with credentials from __ in 2013 to __ today. However, few child care programs have enough credentialed staff members to meet ExceleRate requirements. ExceleRate has suspended enforcement of credentialing requirements so that Silver and Gold programs will not lose their recognition in this staffing crisis. Compensation inequity adds to the problem. As child care entry-level staff members from the communities

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[1] The "sectors" in early care and education are (1) the education system (ISBE), which funds Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative programs through the Early Childhood Block Grant, (2) the child care system (DHS), which funds the Child Care Assistance Program and the Child Care Resource & Referral system, and (3) the federal Head Start/Early Head Start program. Each of these sectors (or "funding streams") serves similar populations but operates independently. The term "program" in this document includes school-based, center-based and home-based early care and education settings. The ExceleRate Illinois standards and ratings (quality recognition) apply to all programs and sectors, but funding and support systems are still administered separately by sector. This vision calls for cross-sector funding and support to reflect a revised set of cross-sector standards. Finally, child day care licensing is administered by DCFS, which might be considered a fourth sector.

served gain credentials, they often move to school-based settings where salaries are much more adequate. Standards and foundational funding for compensation parity are needed.

- National data indicates that block systems (like ours), in which programs must meet every requirement at each level, are less successful at engaging programs than hybrid systems, in which programs have some flexibility to demonstrate and build on their strengths.

<u>System Principles</u>

- *User experience:* The ExceleRate system will be experienced as helpful and easy to use by programs and families seeking to realize their quality goals.

- *Hybrid, strengths-based system:* The ExceleRate system will guide programs to build on the strengths of their families, communities and staff members. A hybrid system includes some required items at each level along with points earned beyond the required items. It lets a program accumulate points in areas of strength, supporting quality recognition even if a specific practice still needs attention.

- *Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) as quality driver #1.* Currently, the CQI routines of collaborative reflection, peer learning and short-term improvement cycles are not called for until the Awards of Excellence level (not currently active). These practices are fundamental for quality at every level. They shift the ownership of quality to the program itself, respecting and engaging the abilities of families and staff teams.
    - Add measures for engagement in CQI, using the Early Learning Council-approved 8 components as a guide.
    - Require the use of program data and assessment scores but decouple the scores from ratings*.* Instruments like ERS, CLASS and PAS[2] were developed for program staff use, not as gateways to funding. High-stakes use encourages "quality for a day." Consider coupling lower assessment scores with access to technical assistance and coaching.
    - Encourage choice of improvement topic areas (e.g. instructional excellence, family & community engagement, inclusion, etc.). Provide menu of program assessment instruments and related resources.
    - Maintain a few required practices at each level. Good things go together, so ExceleRate does not need to define every element of quality, but some key indicators are essential to a rating or recognition system.

- *New child care funding system as quality driver #2.* Implement the Early Learning Council recommendations for funding a Mixed Delivery System. Provide adequate funding to support the foundational cost-intensive elements on which quality is built (staffing and materials), rather than asking programs to put these in place in hope of future "incentive" rate add-ons.
    - In ratings or recognition, distinguish funding-related foundational elements (staffing & materials) from process-related professional practices (CQI and best practice). Every program can create a caring environment and a culture of improvement, but only the funders can make foundational resources available.

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[2] Environment Rating Scales, Classroom Assessment Scoring System, and Program Administration Scale

- o Develop the Early Learning Council-recommended funding ladder or steps (as implemented for Prevention Initiative programs in Chicago some years ago). Each step can be based on the cost model for specific staffing ratios, qualification requirements, compensation, and materials. Programs can choose how far they are able to move in the next funding cycle, and as they implement the enhancements, they earn the related funding. (This will require coordination or blending of Early Childhood Block Grant and Child Care Assistance funding at the state level, just as the Child Care and Development Fund blends separate funding streams at the federal level.)

- *Statewide program assessment system.* Regular staff and parent self-assessments of program quality are important for internal continuous quality improvement work. However, over the past four years, much self-assessment data collected by ExceleRate has been inaccurate and generally unreliable. ExceleRate needs to continue or expand the system of external program assessments (decoupled from ratings) in order to provide programs with good data. Also, aggregated assessment information is needed to inform the state on overall successes and needs. A good model is the ISBE practice of making coaching available when external assessments reveal needs. Assessment results trigger extra support, unlike in the child care system where a low assessment score triggers loss of quality add-on rates.

- *CQI support services.* As recommended by the Early Learning Council, plan and budget for strengthened CQI supports for FY21.

- *Workforce preparation and development.* Stepped funding increases must be based on stepped staffing requirements including ratios, qualifications, compensation and specialized roles. Continued development of higher education program models is urgent. In order to maintain a workforce representative of the families and communities served, college credit for job-embedded professional learning will be essential.

ExceleRate Subcommittee

Follow-up topic areas for building a workplan

- Data needed re system functioning (for restructure rationale and to measure success of proposed changes). INCCRRA collects and reports on most of what we want, so this would be a list of the most important items and any further analysis needed. Examples are: Number of programs at each Circle, number that moved up, etc. Also, we might add items to indicate system-level needs, such as analysis of assessment subscale scores across the system. We have a matrix of data being collected (but not analyzed) at various levels.

  Theresa Hawley, Bethany Patten, Toni Porter and/or Joellyn Whitehead, Teresa Ramos

- Structure for Foundational Quality section: Propose the content or definition of each level. E.g., is Level 1 essentially the staffing and materials requirements of licensing and Level 3 essentially the staffing and materials requirements of PFA or PFA-E?

  Theresa Hawley, Kate Ritter, Donna Emmons, Iveree Brown, Bethany Patten, Jamilah R. Jor'dan, Teresa Ramos, Carie Bires

- Structure for Process Quality section on CQI: Propose ways of measuring program engagement in CQI, based on our 8 component areas

  Marsha Hawley, Mike Abel, Deborah Chalmers, Ashley Nazarak, Jenny Metcalf, Ann Hentschel, Gail Nelson

- Structure for Process Quality section on Professional Practices: Propose categories for required practices or key indicators at each level. Should we use the current categories – Teaching & Learning, Family & Community Engagement, etc., or something else? How should we incorporate the Awards of Excellence categories, especially Inclusion, Linguistically & Culturally Appropriate Practice, and Infant Toddler Services? How can the standards link to program/classroom assessments?

  Ashley Nazarak, Maribel Centeno, Jenny Metcalf, Emily Ropars, Deb Clark, Pat Chamberlain, Teri Talan, Cindy Berrey, Donna Emmons

Other big questions

- Should programs be able to choose improvement topic areas? Would there be something like "badges" (or Awards of Excellence) in specific areas?

- Use of program assessment scores (ERS, CLASS, PAS) in ratings: Cut scores? Improved scores? Neither?

- Piloting: How might a pilot work? Or Implementation scale-up: How could that happen? What would be the critical path items for implementation timing?

- Family child care. What are the foundational items and their costs? Would FCC standards essentially map to the proposed framework? Would networks have a role in CQI?

- How can the framework incentivize the lowest-quality programs to get on the improvement ladder?